

address Amtrak's problems. The first is what we've been doing: blame Amtrak, blame labor, and keep cutting until the system becomes profitable. This method has been a failure. Keeping Amtrak on a starvation budget means maintenance can't be performed, the system can't be improved, and service deteriorates. This path leads to certain bankruptcy and the elimination of intercity passenger rail service in this country.

The people who prefer this method of cutting funding and raising expectations seem to forget a few simple truths: First, the reason Amtrak was created in the first place was because the railroads were hemorrhaging money on passenger service and begged the government to take it off their hands. Second, public transportation is not profitable. No public transit system in the country covers its operating expenses with passenger fares, and virtually no intercity passenger rail systems in the world turn a profit, either. The trains that we admire in Europe are supported yearly by large government subsidies. Third, no form of transportation pays for itself, including highways. But we subsidize them because they improve the quality of our lives. And that's what transportation is about. It's not just getting from one place to another. It's about creating jobs, revitalizing neighborhoods, stimulating commerce, redeveloping underutilized land, and making us more secure.

That's why I'm introducing this legislation today that will put us on the other path towards solving Amtrak's problems: Actually giving it the funding it needs to be successful. That means addressing the huge backlog of deferred maintenance on the Northeast Corridor, and establishing new funding mechanisms to improve rail service throughout the country. This idea has been tried recently, with tremendous success. In California, for example, a serious investment into train service by the State since 1998 has resulted in a near tripling of ridership and a doubling of revenues. They accomplished this with a simple formula: run more trains, run them faster, and run them on time.

This legislation would take that model and build on it. It establishes a Federal/State matching program for passenger rail, similar to what we do for highways and transit, and it provides a stable funding source that's not dependent on annual appropriations. It does this by establishing an independent corporation, the Rail Infrastructure Finance Corporation, which will sell bonds and invest the proceeds in a way to provide for a steady stream of income. The Corporation will select rail projects approved for funding by the Secretary of Transportation, and provide 80 percent of the necessary money, with the State, or consortium of States, providing the other 20 percent. And the money will be distributed in the form of contract authority good for 6 years, so States will be able to make firm long-term plans.

The Corporation will be authorized to distribute \$500 million in contract authority each year, with the bulk of that going to four corridors that have been identified by Amtrak as being "ready to go" for investment: A Southeast Corridor from Washington to Jacksonville; a Midwest Corridor radiating outwards from Chicago to Minneapolis, Detroit, and St. Louis; a Pacific Northwest Corridor from Eugene to Vancouver; and a California Corridor running along the Pacific coast and through the central

valley. Contract authority will also be distributed to states with other federally-designated high-speed corridors, states with long-distance Amtrak trains only, and states not served by Amtrak at all.

The goals of this program are simple: run more trains, faster, and on-time. This does not require using exotic technologies, and it does not require massive new investments. This is just a simple shift of philosophy. Instead of trying to pare Amtrak down until it becomes profitable, which would have the inevitable result of leaving us with no trains at all, we will expand it and improve it so that people begin to ride Amtrak in ever increasing numbers.

In addition, the bill reauthorizes Amtrak at a level of \$2 billion per year, the same level recently passed by the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, which will go a long way towards addressing the \$5 billion in backlogged maintenance on the Northeast Corridor.

Just as important is what this bill does not do. It does not put the burden of paying for trains onto the already over-burdened States. It does not cannibalize Amtrak into different companies. It does not mandate the elimination of long-distance routes. And it does not harm the essential labor protections that cover rail workers.

I have heard some people say that rail is the past. An obsolete mode of transportation for a bygone time. I strongly disagree. In fact, I believe that rail could be the mode of the future. With rising gas prices and overcrowded highways and airports, we need alternative ways to get around. This legislation firmly establishes a true national commitment to intercity rail, and put Amtrak on a path towards lasting success.

HONORING THE LIFE AND SERVICE  
OF SERGEANT ROBERTO  
ARIZOLA, JR.

**HON. HENRY CUELLAR**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 20, 2005

Mr. CUELLAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the life and service of Sergeant Roberto Arizola Jr., who died serving his country as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Sgt. Arizola died on June 8th, 2005 in Baghdad when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle. He was assigned to the Army's 297th Military Intelligence Battalion, 513th Military Intelligence Brigade, of Fort Gordon, Georgia. Roberto was awarded the Army Achievement Medal in 2000 for his extraordinary performance in operations "Joint Endeavor" and "Joint Guard" in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

A superb soldier, Sgt. Arizola was an even better friend, husband, and father. Roberto was kind and loving, possessing a charismatic personality that brought joy to those lucky enough to share in his company.

Sgt. Arizola died a soldier, defending the lives of those unable to defend themselves. The father of a seven-year-old son, he died so that other families and other children might live. He gave up a safe life in a free country so that others might grow up in safety and freedom.

Sergeant Roberto Arizola gave his life to protect ordinary people from those who would

do them harm. He leaves behind him an example of extraordinary service and courage. He died a hero, and he deserves the thanks of a grateful nation.

IN HONOR OF THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY  
OF IRRELEVANT WEEK

**HON. CHRISTOPHER COX**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 20, 2005

Mr. COX. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Andy Stokes, this year's 255th National Football League draft pick. The final pick of the NFL draft is a position of tremendous honor in my hometown of Newport Beach, California. For the past 30 years, the NFL Underdog has been treated to a week-long celebration in his honor. This annual tradition of Irrelevant Week was founded by my friend Paul Salata as an occasion for "Doing Something Nice For No Reason." Irrelevant Week XXX, which commences today, will celebrate "Mr. Irrelevant" Andy Stokes, a tight end from William Penn University in Iowa, who was chosen by the New England Patriots as the final pick in the 2005 NFL draft.

Though Andy Stokes may have been the final pick for the Patriots, the St. George, Utah native will be number one in Newport Beach as we use this occasion to celebrate the NFL Underdog and to recognize all former "Mr. Irrelevants" from the past three decades. Among the highlighted events for Irrelevant Week XXX are a welcoming party, grand banquet, and activities at various Southern California resorts. The fun and games will include a football game with Mickey and Goofy at Disneyland, a tailgate party at Angel Stadium before the Angels vs. Dodgers baseball game, and a visit to Hollywood Park with other NFL alumni for a day of horse racing action.

This special anniversary Irrelevant Week also serves as an opportunity to pay tribute to its 30 years of service to our community. Though Irrelevant Week is a lighthearted affair, over the years it has helped to raise over one million dollars for charities that help youth in both the academic and athletic arenas. This year, at the behest of Newport Beach Fire Chief Tim Riley, who serves on the Irrelevant Week steering committee, Irrelevant Week will be sending 15 to 20 children to special camps designed to lend emotional support and friendship to child burn survivors. Other beneficiaries of Irrelevant Week XXX include Costa Mesa United and Orangewood Children's Home.

Irrelevant Week has long been recognized by the NFL, ESPN and others in the sports world because it is a celebration of the underdog. Moreover, Irrelevant Week provides an opportunity for sharing community spirit and providing support for children in need. On behalf of the United States House of Representatives, I would like to commend Paul Salata and his family for founding and carrying on the tradition of Irrelevant Week for the past 30 years. I also ask my colleagues to join me today in congratulating Andy Stokes on his selection as "Mr. Irrelevant" and wishing him the very best for a long and successful career in the National Football League.